

Uncertainty and Teachers' Organizational Commitment in Egyptian Public Schools

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Abstract

Ranging from daily to strategic decisions, uncertainty is an integral part of the decision making process in all schools. Regardless of their experience, teachers are suffering from the lack of information and unpredictable future events that their schools face. Given the fact that Egypt has tried to use education as a mechanism for attaining economic soundness and organizational effectiveness, the present study explores the effect of the different types of uncertainty (strategic, structural, and job-related) on teachers' organizational commitment approaches (affective, continuance, and normative). Upon collecting 150 out of 200 distributed questionnaire sets, the researchers used correlation and regression to test the hypotheses. The analysis of the collected data showed a negative correlation between uncertainty types (strategic, structural, and job-related) and two approaches of organizational commitment (affective and continuance). No relationship was found between uncertainty types and teachers' normative commitment.

Keywords: uncertainty; strategic uncertainty; structural uncertainty; job-related uncertainty; organizational commitment; Egypt

Introduction

The first attempt to describe uncertainty was made in 1921 by Knight who referred to it as instability in the business environment managers face (Samsami, Hosseini, Kordnaeij and Azar, 2015). The concept "uncertainty" has received most attention after the development of e-business and knowledge-driven enterprises in the last three decades (Koh & Simpson, 2005). Moreover, it has been noted that the concept uncertainty was originally presented by economists and psychologists. After a short period of its emergence, it came to be considered a main factor in explaining strategic management (Porter, 1980), organizational behavior (Pfeffer & Salanick, 1978), organizational learning (Ellis & Shpielberg, 2003), project management (Karlsen, 2011) and other management concepts.

Song (2015) highlights that uncertainty has come into existence to describe the lack of information about future events organizations face. Furthermore, Samsami et al. (2015) indicate that uncertainty has appeared not only to illustrate inability to take decisions concerning the future but also the implications of these decisions.

Additionally, the studies of (Hall & Saias, 1989; Weick, 1996, and Song, 2013) elaborate that competing in our current turbulent environment depends mainly on becoming aware of the rapid, continuous, and uncertain changes organizations face on the one hand, and knowing how to manage such uncertainty on the other. This has fostered the development and application of what is classified as uncertainty management tools (Raz & Hillson, 2005). Moreover, Koh and Simpson (2005) mention that agility, which entails a quick reaction to market changes, and responsiveness, which entails a balanced response to predictable and unpredictable changes, are the key drivers for facing the challenges of uncertainty.

From another perspective, organizational commitment has been seen as a key factor in organization and behavior sciences due to its effect on outcomes such as absenteeism, intentions to leave, turnover and performance (Daniel & Jardon, 2015). Since its appearance in 1970, this concept is used to describe employees' emotional attachment to their organization, then it has expanded to describe the relationship between employees and employer, and finally it has been expanded to encompass both a belief in organizational goals, culture and structure on the one hand, and a desire to continue organizational membership on the other (Becker, 1960; Buchanan, 1974; Mowday, Porter & Stears, 1982; Gbadamosi, 2003; Omar, Anuar, Majid & Johari, 2012).

Rego and Cunha (2008, p.4) state that "in the management discourse, commitment is a central variable, given that more committed people tend to devote higher efforts to work, thus contributing to organizational performance". Accordingly and given its impact on organizational performance, many managerial fields such as organizational behavior, leadership and human resources management have handled the topic of organizational commitment theoretically and empirically (Ahiauzu & Asawo, 2012). However, Fry (2003) affirms the need to explore the factors influencing employee commitment in order to enhance both individual and organizational effectiveness.

Education is often seen as a paradigm on which developing nations rely to accelerate their potential growth (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003). Egypt is one of the developing nations that has tried to use education as a mechanism for attaining economic soundness and organizational effectiveness (Mahrous & Kortam, 2012). Egypt is currently facing a serious problem that affects the whole educational process; the majority of its teachers are leaving their jobs in governmental schools in search for better work opportunities in the private

sector and gulf countries.

Many teachers claim that besides their low salaries, they are afraid of the changes of their job roles, responsibilities and promotion opportunities (Mousa & Alas, 2016). Others claim that they suffer from the continuous changes in their leadership and subsequently functions within their work units. Since governmental schools are the main destination for Egyptian children of low and middle income families, this lack of teachers' commitment may harm not only the whole educational process but also the intended economic reform (Alas & Mousa, 2016).

Considering the above and the limited research conducted to investigate the association between uncertainty and organizational commitment of Egyptian teachers, this study seeks to fill in this gap by examining such association in public primary schools in Menoufia, Egypt.

Literature Review

1. *Uncertainty*

Uncertainty is one of the most dominant concepts in business literature nowadays. It has become rare to find a study in the field of management that does not mention this concept (Samsami, et al., 2015). This stems from the fact that uncertainty affects not only organizational members but also organizational choices (Song, 2013).

The first trial to conceptualize uncertainty was made by Knight (1921) who defines it as instability in the business environment organizations face. Garner (1962) defines it as a characteristic of all future possible implications that are related to organizational decisions. Milliken (1981) considers it as "an individual's perceived inability to predict something accurately".

Ellis and Shpielberg (2003) classify uncertainty into three categories. The first category reflects managers' lack of understanding of how their environment is changing. The second category reflects the limited ability of managers to predict the future of their organizations. The third category reflects the absence of knowledge and the inability of managers to predict the future of their organizations.

Although the studies of (Deft et al., 1998; Tymon et al., 1998, and Harrison & Kelly, 2010) affirm that external environment of an organization is considered the only source of uncertainty, Sinding et al. (1998) indicate that both the external environment (the nature, rules and measures) and the internal environment (financial capability, organizational values and information processing) can cause ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty.

In some literature in the field of economics, economists use uncertainty and risk interchangeably. However, Mack (1971) states that "the risk exists when two or more states are possible and the probability of each of them can be determined with certainty. Uncertainty is used in cases where information is insufficient and observations are irregular. Deep uncertainty exists when the inferential (logical reasons) and experimental (observations) foundations of knowledge are weak". Accordingly, he believes that uncertainty is wider than risk.

It is worth mentioning that according to Alas and Mousa (2016), managing uncertainty is considered part of organizational culture and can be dealt with by knowledge sharing. Hillson (1997) develops a formal maturity model to assess organizations' current uncertainty capabilities. This maturity model consists of the following four levels:

- Naïve: at this level, the organization doesn't fully understand the significance and the need for uncertainty management.
- Novice: at this level, the organization has started to adopt uncertainty management. However, an organized formalized approach for managing this uncertainty is still missing.
- Normalized: at this level, the organization has designed and adopted a formal integrated approach to manage uncertainty.
- Natural: at this level, the organization has considered uncertainty management as a main part of its organizational culture. Moreover, it becomes fully aware of the importance of adopting a continuous integrated approach to manage such uncertainty.

In their study, Bordia et al. (2004) illustrate three types of uncertainty:

- Strategic uncertainty: uncertainty regarding organization level aspects such as sustainability, future direction, and nature of business environment that an organization faces.
- Structural uncertainty: uncertainty derives from internal changes within the organization. This may include changes in reporting structure, policies, and functions of work units.
- Job-related uncertainty: uncertainty regarding job responsibilities, job roles, promotion opportunities, and so forth.

Bordia et al. (2004) considers that uncertainty is of great importance in the organizational context because it has a positive correlation with work stress (Pollard, 2001). Also it has a negative correlation with both job satisfaction (Ashford et al., 1989) and trust (Schweiger & Denisi, 1991). Song (2015) considers that the public sector organizations have become uncertain because of three factors: negative image that results from the illegal acts of their members, organization-specific change that derives from leadership turnover, and finally an

uncontrollable environment that results from changes in legislative support.

From what has preceded above, it appears that uncertainty has its considerable effect on organizations' future choices. Needless to say that exploring uncertainty and knowing how to manage it assists organizations in not only making good decisions but also expecting good outcomes from these decisions.

2. Organizational commitment

The concept organizational commitment has come into existence in the first few years of 1970s (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Moreover, the concept has gained a rapid popularity between organization scholars, psychology specialists, and business professional due to its significance in addressing the relationship between employees and employer (Becker, 1960; Mowday et al. , 1979; Rajendran & Raduan, 2005, Omar et al. 2012; Mousa & Alas, 2016 and Alas & Mousa, 2016).

The year 1974 witnessed the first contributions to illustrate clear characteristics of organizational commitment. The contribution was made by Porter et al. and they specify that the characteristics of organizational commitment as:

- An acceptance of organizational goals.
- A willingness to put the maximum effort on behalf of the organization.
- A desire to maintain membership in the organization.

Buchanan (1974) sees that organizational commitment can be defined as “a partisan or affective attachment to the aims and values of an organization for its own sake”. Mowday et al. (1979) see commitment as “The willingness to expend personal, temporal, and psychological resources on behalf of a particular domain”. They explain organizational commitment as “The extent to which an individual identifies and involved with his or her organization and/or is unwilling to leave it”. Furthermore, Allen and Meyer (2000) consider it as psychological state that reduces employee's likelihood of leaving his/ her organization. Meyer and Allen (1991) have classified organizational commitment into three approaches: affective, continuance and normative.

- Affective commitment: reflects an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in his organization (Bryant et al. , 2007). Perry (2004) points out that a healthy and transparent communication between managers and employees besides a clear context of organizational objectives, responsibilities, and justice can support an employee's affective commitment.
- Continuance commitment: reflects an employee's perceived cost of leaving his/ her organization (Bryant et al. 2007 and Rego & Cunha, 2008). The studies of (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Haim, 2007 and Abidin et al. 2010) affirm that an employee's investments (efforts, job expertise, unused vacation and so forth in his job affect his decision and/ or intention to leave and/or continue with his organization.
- Normative commitment: reflects an employee's obligation to stay in his organization (Bryant et al. 2007). Meyer and Allen (1997); Kaur & Sharma (2015) and Alas & Mousa (2016) show that organizational culture (knowledge sharing, level of autonomy, open communication, adaptability, motivation, coaching, learning, rewards and etc.) can be seen as determinants of an employee's normative commitment.

Abidin, et al., (2010) and Mousa & Alas (2016) claim that employees who identify with their organization tend to focus much more on their organizational survival and competitiveness. That's why they do their best to attain better quality work performance and to fulfill their responsibilities in achieving higher productivity rates. Moreover, Omar, Anuar, Majid and Johari (2012) highlight that committed employees are the most valuable assets for any organization. Thus, having committed employees enhances organizational competitiveness by reducing rates of turnover and intentions to quit (Omar et al., 2012).

In a different perspective, Haim (2007) raises the argument of whether or not the organizations should keep their long-term commitment/contracts to their workplace despite the emerging technologization and globalization. He notices that there is an increasing trend towards downsizing and outsourcing of labor activities which may yield a need to restructure the meaning and measurement of the concept organizational commitment. Using Albert Hirschman's (1970) model of voice and loyalty, employees can use a range of five behavioral modes of commitment in facing organizational crisis: Exit, voice, loyalty, neglect and silence (Haim, 2007).

3. Education in Egypt

Education is the keystone of any step towards economic development (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003). Accordingly, Egypt often tries to use education as a mechanism to foster its prospective advancements as explained by Mahrous and Kortam (2012). Accordingly to Hargreaves (2001) education in Egypt has passed by three stages: 1950-1970, 1970-1981, and 1981 to the present. In the first stage (1950-1970), educational programs were controlled by the principles of socialism, Arabism, and national consciousness due to the 1952 revolution (Hargreaves, 2001). In the second stage (1970-1981), the educational system reflected a mixed economy-driven

and divided culture because of the concentrated shift towards establishing an open economy during this stage (Hargreaves, 2001). In the third stage, despite the fact that in 1995 the Egyptian ministry of education and higher education described educational reform as a matter of national survival (Hargreaves, 2001), there was and still are some negative educational social phenomena such as drug addiction, slum living conditions, and children living in the streets (Soliman & Abd Elmegied, 2010) Moreover, there was an initiative to train Egyptian teachers in western countries, but this kind of educational dialogue did not continue for a long period. The halt of this educational training initiative shows a missing ability to create a real liaison with any outside resources with the capabilities of assisting Egyptian educational system reform (Soliman & Abd Elmegied, 2010).

Research Methodology

Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework is designed based on a review of previous studies conducted to demonstrate the relationship between uncertainty and organizational commitment. In this study the proposed independent variables are: strategic uncertainty, structural uncertainty, and job-related uncertainty. Organizational commitment approaches (affective, continuance and normative) function as dependent variables.

Hypotheses

Based on the previous literature review, the researcher will test the following hypotheses:

- H1: There is a negative connection between uncertainty types (strategic uncertainty, structural uncertainty and job-related uncertainty) and affective commitment.
- H2: There is a negative relationship between uncertainty types (strategic uncertainty, structural uncertainty and job-related uncertainty) and normative commitment.
- H3: There is a negative relationship between uncertainty types (strategic uncertainty, structural uncertainty and job-related uncertainty) and continuance commitment.

Survey Instruments

This quantitative research uses a questionnaire to collect the primary data. Most of questions included in the questionnaire are based on established, existing models, with some modifications made to the original questions with regards to the cultural aspect of this study sample. The questionnaire prepared for this study contains three main sections: Demographic variables, organizational commitment, and uncertainty. A five-point Likert scale is used for all items under organizational commitment and uncertainty.

- Section A: Demographic Variables: This involves questions about the personal information of the targeted respondents such as gender, age, marital status, level of income, and organizational tenure.
- Section B: Organizational Commitment: Based on Allen and Mayer's (1990) three dimensional model of organizational commitment, this section covers the three approaches of organizational commitment: affective, continuance and normative. In other words, this section involves three subscales and each subscale has eight items.
- Section C: Uncertainty: Based on Bordia et al. (2004) designed survey of uncertainty, this section is prepared to cover three types of uncertainty: strategic uncertainty, structural uncertainty, and job-related uncertainty. This section includes three subscales: The first subscale involves four questions about strategic uncertainty, and the second has four questions about structural uncertainty, and the third contains four questions about job-related uncertainty.

Scope of the study

Teachers who are working in public schools in Menoufia province in Egypt are the main population sample of this study. They are chosen as a sample for this study because they represent the category of Egyptian teachers who are working in public schools and who are likely to opt for offers from private schools in Egypt or to others in Gulf countries. Also, it deserves to be mentioned that the researcher can reach many teachers in this province. By dividing the population into homogenous subgroups and then taking a simple random sample from each subgroup, the researchers count on stratified random sampling. Such adoption of stratified random sampling reduces any possible bias and at the same time ensures that the chosen simple random sample represents the general population.

Since teachers who are working in Egyptian public schools are classified into five categories (junior teachers, first class teachers, alpha first class teachers, expert teachers and finally senior teachers), the use of stratified random sampling guarantees that each subgroup is represented in the chosen sample. And since it is difficult to pre-determine the size of population in this case, the researchers have chosen to distribute 200 sets of questionnaires to the targeted respondents. Needless to say, the sets of questionnaire will be delivered in Arabic for ease of communication all targeted respondents and in order to motivate them to respond.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, the SPSS will be used to show the normal descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation. The SPSS Pearson correlation will be adopted to get the results of hypotheses testing.

Research Findings

As previous stated, the researcher distributed 200 sets of questionnaires and received responses from 150 teachers. With the help of stratified random sampling, the researcher formed the following profiles of respondents (see table 1).

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Demographic Variables	Items	Count
Gender	Male	123
	Female	27
Age	below 25 years	15
	26-30 years	30
	31-35 years	30
	36-40 years	25
	41-45 years	20
	46-50 years	20
	More than 50 years	10
Marital States	Single	40
	Married	74
	Other	36
Level of Education	Bachelor	100
	Bachelor + Diploma	48
	Master	2
Level of Income	EGP 1200	15
	EGP 1300-2500	30
	EGP 2500-4000	53
	EGP 4000-5500	40
	Above 5500	12
Organizational tenure	Less than 1 year	3
	1-3 years	12
	4-6 years	60
	7-9 years	45
	10-12 years	20
	Above 15 years	10
Religion	Muslim	145
	Christian	5
Work Bases	Full time	150
	Part time	0

Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach alpha is used to assess the internal consistency of each of the variables used in the study. As depicted in Table 2, all variables have adequate levels of internal consistency and meet the acceptable standard of 0.60 (Sekaran, 2003). In this study, the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient is 0.716 (see Table 2).

Table 2 Reliability Analysis

Scale name	Number of items	Coefficient alpha values
Organizational Commitment	24	0.904
Affective commitment	8	0.771
Continuance commitment	8	0.760
Normative commitment	8	0.801
Uncertainty	12	0.757
Strategic uncertainty	4	.760
Structural uncertainty	4	.933
Job related uncertainty	4	.762
Total	36	.716

Hypothesis 1

- a) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of -0.397, and the value is highly significant (P= 0.0). This correlation coefficient proves that strategic uncertainty negatively affects teachers' affective commitment. The result (R²= 0.152, P= 0.0) suggests that when strategic uncertainty is existed, there is a 15.2% decrease in teachers' affective commitment (see Table 3).

Table 3 Correlation and Regression between Strategic Uncertainty and Affective Commitment

Model	r	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate
1	-.397	.158	.152	.46796

- b) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of -.255 and the value is highly significant (P= 0.002). This correlation coefficient proves that structural uncertainty negatively affects teachers' affective commitment. The result (R²= 0.065, P= 0.002) suggests that if teachers face a structural uncertainty, the result is a 6.5 % decrease in their level of affective commitment (see Table 4).

Table 4 Correlation and Regression, between Structural Uncertainty and Affective Commitment

Model	r	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate
1	-.255	.065	.059	.49309

- c) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of -.539, and this value is highly significant (P= 0.0). This negative correlation coefficient proves that job-related uncertainty negatively affects teachers' affective commitment. The result (R²= 0.290, P= 0.0) suggests that if job-related uncertainty is felt, the result is a 29% decrease in teachers' affective commitment (see Table 5).

Table 5 Correlation and Regression, between Job- related Uncertainty and Affective Commitment

Model	r	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate
1	-.539	.290	.286	.42961

Findings 1: Since all types of uncertainty negatively affect teachers' affective commitment, the first hypothesis is fully accepted. The results show that job-related uncertainty (.290) has much more effect than strategic uncertainty (.158) and structural uncertainty (.065).

Hypothesis 2

- a) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of -0.250, and the value is highly significant (P= 0.002). This correlation coefficient proves that strategic uncertainty negatively affects teachers' continuance commitment. The result (R²= 0.062, P= 0.002) suggests that when strategic uncertainty exists, there is a 6.2% decrease in teachers' continuance commitment (see Table 6).

Table 6 Correlation and Regression between Strategic Uncertainty and Continuance Commitment

Model	r	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate
1	-.250	.062	.056	.52819

- b) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of -.227, and the value is highly significant (P= 0.005). This correlation coefficient proves that structural uncertainty negatively affects teachers' continuance commitment. The result (R²= 0.051, P= 0.005) suggests that if teachers face structural uncertainty, the result is a 5 % decrease in their level of continuance commitment (see Table 7).

Table 7 Correlation and Regression, between Structural Uncertainty and Continuance Commitment

Model	r	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate
1	.227	.051	.045	.53126

- c) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of -.255, and the value is highly significant (P= 0.002). This negative correlation coefficient proves that job-related uncertainty negatively affects teachers' continuance commitment. The result (R²= 0.065, P= 0.002) suggests that if job-related uncertainty is felt, the result is a 6.5 % decrease in teachers' continuance commitment (see Table 8).

Table 8 Correlation and Regression, between Job- related Uncertainty and Affective Commitment

Model	r	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate
1	-.255	.065	.059	.52747

Findings 2: Since all types of uncertainty negatively affect teachers' continuance commitment, the second hypothesis is fully accepted. The results show that job- related uncertainty (0.065) has much more effect than strategic uncertainty (.062) and structural uncertainty (.051).

Hypothesis 3

- a) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of -.136, and the value is not significant (P= 0.098). This correlation coefficient implies that strategic uncertainty does not positively or negatively affect

teachers' normative commitment. Specifically, the result ($R^2= 0.018$, $P= 0.098$) suggests that even if there were a level of strategic uncertainty, there is a limited chance of it affecting teachers' level of normative commitment (See table 9).

Table 9 Correlation and Regression, between Strategic Uncertainty and Normative Commitment

Model	r	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate
1	-.136	.018	.012	.58399

- b) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of -.144, and the value is highly significant ($P=0.078$). This value of correlation coefficient implies that structural uncertainty has a very limited affect on the teachers' normative commitment. The result ($R^2= 0.021$, $P= 0.078$) suggests that even if teachers face structural uncertainty, it has no effect on their feelings of obligation towards their school (see table10).

Table 10 Correlation and Regression, between Structural Uncertainty and Normative Commitment

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate
1	-.144	.021	.014	.58327

- c) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of -.211, and the value is highly significant ($P= 0.010$). This result shows a very weak correlation between job-related uncertainty and teachers' normative commitment. The result ($R^2= 0.044$, $P= 0.010$) shows that even if there were feelings of job-related uncertainty, there is a limited chance of it affecting teachers' level of normative commitment (See table 11).

Table 11 Correlation and regression, between Job-related Uncertainty and Normative Commitment

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of the estimate
1	-.211	.044	.038	.57622

Findings 3: There is no registered correlation between uncertainty types and teachers' normative commitment. Thus, hypothesis 3 is not accepted.

Conclusion and discussion

This study has investigated the relationship between types of uncertainty (strategic, structural and job-related) and three approaches of organizational commitment (affective, continuance and normative). The results show a negative correlation between the three types of uncertainty and affective and continuance commitment. Moreover, the three types of uncertainty (strategic, structural and job-related) show an insignificant correlation with normative commitment. Job-related uncertainty emerged to be the most dominant variable in predicting teachers' continuance and affective commitment to their school.

To survive in an uncertain, instable, and turbulent environment, schools should start by sense of the surrounding political, economic, social, cultural, and technical changes in their environment. In addition, it is crucial to identify the present amount of uncertainty. These two steps would foster more successful organizational decision making with regards to internal procedures (e.g. changes in school's organizational hierarchy, organizational personnel policies and even school's mission) (Ellis & Shpielberg, 2003).

In a climate of uncertainty, enhancing teachers' organizational commitment requires an advocated strategy of knowledge sharing and communication. Sharing of knowledge enables teachers to gain and sustain all information related to change and its implications inside and outside their school. Accordingly, teachers would feel more secure and capable of adapting themselves to keep in pace with any intended organizational change (Bordia et al., 2004). This comes in agreement with Karlson (2011) who mentions that knowledge, experience, and skills are key components to manage uncertainty and build commitment.

Given the history of public schools in Egypt, the Ministry of Education and school administrations need to rethink the psychological and cultural mechanisms adopted to deal with their teachers. Schools need to address teachers' psychological and material needs. As such, holding training sessions and seminars together with research activities on uncertainty and its consequences on teachers' commitment are imperative to create a healthy and stable work environment where teachers feel valued and their full capacities are utilized for the betterment of their schools.

In conclusion, the present study has tried to fill in a gap in management literature by examining the relationship between three types of uncertainty and the three of approaches organizational commitment. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, this study appears to be one of the first to discuss uncertainty and organizational commitment in Egypt and the whole Arab region. Accordingly, the results seem to be different, to some extent, from those yielded by other studies conducted in Europe.

This study may be subject to criticism because it excluded moderating variables such as organizational satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior. However, such moderating variables may be considered in future research by the researcher and/or other scholars in the field.

It is worth mentioning that the present study opens up new directions for future research. The researchers suggest that the research question be tested in other settings such as private schools or any other public sectors (e.g. public companies, universities, ministries and so on) to determine whether it would lead to similar results or not. The researchers see that it would be interesting to indicate the means to support employees' level of commitment in an era of uncertainty.

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